

Implementing Liberal Education and Effective Practice (LEEP)

First Year Intensives & Pre-major Advising:
Lessons from Year One



First Year Intensives & Pre-major Advising: Lessons from Year One



Agenda

- > Background & rationale
- > Definitions & expectations
- > What we learned in 2010
 - > Academic and social challenges
 - > Course design & assignment considerations
 - > Advising advice
- > For 2011
 - > Logistics
 - > Resources
 - > Follow-up

2

Background and rationale: Why FYIs?



- > LEEP Task Force [recommendations](#).
- > Intellectual underpinnings from the learning sciences
 1. Research on high-impact educational practices
 - Various [categories](#) including but not limited to first-year experiences
 - "The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on [critical inquiry](#), [frequent writing](#), [information literacy](#), [collaborative learning](#), and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with [cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research](#)." *George D. Kuh (AAC&U, 2008)*
 2. Research on adolescent/young adult phases of development
 1. Transition to college
 2. Growth and exploration
 3. Synthesis and demonstration

3

LEEP and the transition phase



- > [LEEP and the Transition to College](#)
- > From the *Task Force Report*: "The **transition phase** marks the initiation of the new student into the community and provides initial support for student success...."
- > During this phase:
 - > Student sharpen fundamental skills, especially verbal literacy and formal analysis
 - > The institution conveys a sense of its high expectations
 - > Faculty and more advanced peers play central roles, though the student will eventually take greater personal responsibility

4



FYIs at Clark

- > **Definitions** — [First Year Intensive Learning Experiences approved by UAB](#)
- > Each FYI has a [PLS designation](#)
- > Three types
 - 1) Topic-focused
 - 2) Introductory
 - 3) Research-oriented

For details, see [FYI description on class of 2015 webpage](#)

- > Does FYI = FYS ?? (see next slide)
- > Students select FYI over the summer, may not always get their first choice

5



So what makes it “intensive”?

- > [A Guide for First Year Instructors](#)
- > Students misunderstand “intensive”
 - Clark’s first year experience may be quite different from that offered by other schools

6



Who are our students?

- > Class of 2015 demographics are not yet certain
- > Jeffrey Arnett’s [CETL talk](#) is instructive with regard to the characteristics of this generation
- > Last year @ Clark
 - 2010 was the first time we placed every student in an FYI
 - Still analyzing retention, performance
 - Faculty observations about students varied; are documented in the slides to follow

7



WHAT WE LEARNED - 1

Academic and intellectual challenges for first-year students include:

1. Adapting to the college classroom
 - > How to “be” in a seminar, laboratory section, or any college class
 - > How to manage themselves in a small group setting
2. College-level reading and writing. These [Harvard resources](#) come highly recommended.
3. Allocating enough time for academic work outside of class
4. Learning from peers, TAs, PLAs, PAs, peers, upper class students
5. Getting help
 - Students MUST be encouraged to ask—beyond parents.
 - Remind them of campus resources, and fact that there is no shame in using them. They are here to learn, not to perform fantastically (at first)
 - Invite to class: Writing Center director, librarians, Community Engagement and Volunteering Center staff, Dean of Students staff

8



WHAT WE LEARNED - 2

Social and psychological challenges for first-year students

- Not all go through "transition" the same way
- > Can we refine our three-stage model?
- > Faculty should refer students to other campus experts for psychological/social concerns
- > FYIs focus on academic transition, but it all connects

9



WHAT WE LEARNED - 3

Course design options:

- Offer extra help sessions
- Act as "college coach"
- Offer FYI tip of the week
- Establish a sense of place: Worcester, Clark, neighborhood
- Do less, especially if you are incorporating field experiences
 - Build in time for reflection
- Assign and accompany students to a campus-wide talk
- > Fall 2011 Difficult Dialogue topic will be higher education
- Use PLAs

10



WHAT WE LEARNED - 4

Advice on assignments

- > Students are worried about grades; don't know how to interpret v, v+ or 1-5 scale, are afraid to ask.
- > Rubrics can help with grading; some faculty generate the rubric as a class.
- > Team contributions need to be evaluated. Contact CETL for suggested form and guidelines.
- > "Longer" (5-8 page) papers will be a challenge.
- > Students expect a significant professor presence on Cicada because they have yet to learn to learn from their peers and not be so dependent on faculty
- > Interview assignments are usually too demanding for FYI students unless a key course goal.
- > The concept of office hours is unfamiliar and intimidating to some.
 - > Several faculty required that students make an appointment to discuss course assignments (supplementing time for advising issues)

11



WHAT WE LEARNED - 5

Possible class discussion/advising topics

1. LEEP
 - > Admissions has been explaining; Week One activities may address
 - > Students may say "I want to do LEEP"
2. Plagiarism /integrity
 - > Survey results show that occurrences are decreasing
 - Perhaps due to Week One session with PAs
 - > Most cases are first year students
3. Time management
 - > Students resist work load, think all that matters is what happens in class, what is graded.
 - > Need to be explicit about this. Tell them how much time to spend out of class.
 - > Hard to know where to draw line at hand-holding.
4. Mid-semester course feedback can be effective – contact CETL for format and guidelines
5. Introduce students to your scholarly discipline and your profession
6. Your suggestions?

12



FYI logistics

- > Remember the Jewish holidays in your planning.
- > If you use PLAs and/or TAs in class, be aware of their different roles and explain this to students.
- > If student's FYI placement is a mistake – especially a concern in the sciences – let Kevin McKenna know as soon as possible
- > Midterm grade reports are strongly encouraged
- > Attendance is THE key indicator of success in college. It's a good idea to follow up on absences.

13



Resources

- > CETL now has an [FYI section](#)
- > Last year's [FYI faculty](#) know quite a bit
- > Informal fall instructor gatherings are planned
- > FYI funding will be made available. Use for:
 - Speaker honoraria
 - Travel
 - Museum, event admissions
 - PLA payment
 - Food

14



Advising

Overview

- > See [Task Force Report](#) on FYIs & advising
- > See [3Rs](#), pages 7-10 especially

What's new in 2011

- > Updated resources on Academic Advising website
 - > [Advice for Prospective Majors](#)
 - > [Scholarship and Fellowship Information](#)
- > Adviser conversations need to encourage exploration, not just fulfilling requirements. See [A Guide for FY Instructors](#).
- > Students should make their own tentative schedules for the spring, and initiate contacts across campus regarding permissions, etc. Goal is to "re-responsibilize" them. Challenging but important.
- > Students get anxious about October course selection and registration, since they did not all register at the same time in the summer. Encourage them to research spring classes, and to have backups for popular courses.

15



WHAT WE LEARNED - 6

- > Consult [The 3Rs: Academic Advising Handbook](#) for advice about advising conversations at various points in the academic year
- > Other suggestions for advising conversations from FYI feedback sessions
 - Explain the arc of semester
 - Leave classroom and let PA, PLA, TA answer questions
 - Count out loud the hours of work expected outside of class
 - Ask about managing extra-curricular activities
 - At midterm group meeting, ask what's best thing about college; what's most challenging
 - Acknowledge midterm & final stress
 - Encourage opportunities for informal reflection on college life – give list of topics/questions

16



WHAT WE LEARNED - 7

Other suggestions for advising conversations from FYI feedback sessions

Final & reading period time management is especially problematic
Most students have never done course evaluations, and don't understand the purpose

- > **If adviser is not the FYI instructor:**
 - Consider goal setting, career interest discussions
 - Attend a few classes and be familiar with assignments and projects; incorporate academic work into advising discussions
- > **Specifically for the sciences:**
 - Using Goddard and Science librarians.
 - How to read a textbook for science

17



CONCLUSION

- > We will continue to assess the FYI program

[Liberal Education at Clark](#) describes goals of our entire educational program

The LEEP Lab will be evaluating FYIs and the transition to college
Program assessment differs from evaluating individual teachers (UWTE)

- > **Work load: it's the emotional labor**
- > **Let's keep this conversation going.....**
- > Questions? mboyle@clarku.edu

18